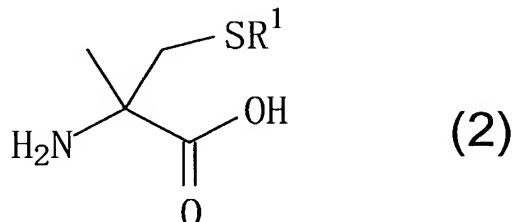


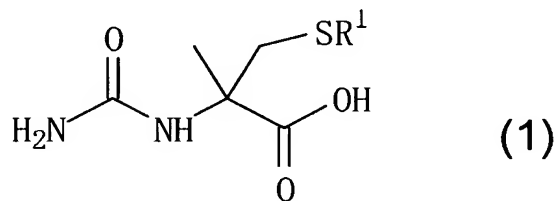
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CLAIMS

1. A process for producing a racemic or optically active α -methylcysteine derivative represented by general formula

5 (2):



(wherein R^1 represents a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl group having 1 to 20 carbon atoms, a substituted or unsubstituted aralkyl group having 7 to 20 carbon atoms, or
10 a substituted or unsubstituted aryl group having 6 to 20 carbon atoms), the process comprising a step of hydrolyzing a racemic or optically active N-carbamyl- α -methylcysteine derivative represented by general formula (1):



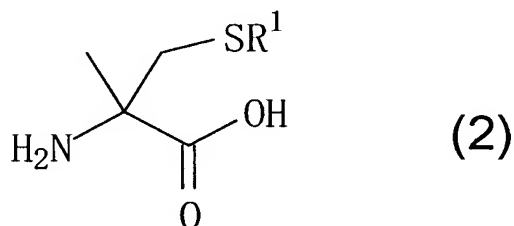
15 (wherein R^1 is as defined above) by treating with decarbamylase.

2. The process according to claim 1, wherein the N-carbamyl- α -methylcysteine derivative (1) and the resultant α -methylcysteine derivative (2) are optically active.

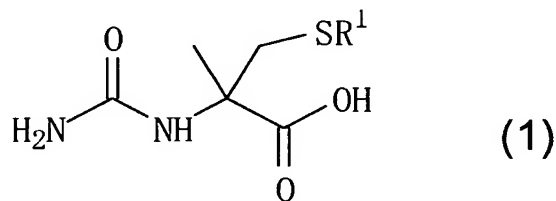
20 3. The process according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the N-carbamyl- α -methylcysteine derivative (1) and the resultant

α -methylcysteine derivative (2) are L-isomers.

4. A process for producing an optically active α -methylcysteine derivative represented by general formula (2):



5 (wherein R^1 represents a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl group having 1 to 20 carbon atoms, a substituted or unsubstituted aralkyl group having 7 to 20 carbon atoms, or a substituted or unsubstituted aryl group having 6 to 20 carbon atoms) and an optically active N-carbamyl- α -methylcysteine derivative having a configuration opposite to that of the compound, the process comprising a step of stereoselectively hydrolyzing a racemic N-carbamyl- α -methylcysteine derivative represented by general formula (1):



15 (wherein R^1 is as defined above) by treating with decarbamylase.

5. The process according to claim 4, wherein the resultant α -methylcysteine derivative (2) is an L-isomer.

6. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the decarbamylase is derived from microorganisms belonging to genus *Agrobacterium*, *Rhizobium*, or *Pseudomonas*.

7. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the decarbamylase is derived from *Agrobacterium* sp. KNK712 (FERM BP-1900), *Rhizobium* sp. KNK1415 (FERM BP-4419), or *Pseudomonas* sp. KNK003A (FERM BP-3181).

5 8. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the decarbamylase is derived from *Escherichia coli* HB101 (pNT4553) (FERM BP-4368).

9. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein the decarbamylase is used in the form of an immobilized enzyme.

10 10. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein R^1 is a substituted or unsubstituted tertiary alkyl group having 4 to 15 carbon atoms.

11. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein R^1 is a tert-butyl group.